DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 167 613 TM 008 426

AUTHOR Raivetz, Mark J.
TITLE The Effects of Budget Reductions on Program Evaluation in a Large Urban School System: Providing Services Beyond Resources.
PUB DATE Mar 78
NOTE 31p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (62nd, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, March 27-31, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; *Financial Problems; *Job Layoff; *Problem Solving; Program Evaluation; *Research Coordinating Units; School Community Relationship; School Districts; *School District Spending
IDENTIFIERS Pennsylvania (Philadelphia); *Philadelphia School District PA

ABSTRACT

To examine Philadelphia's 1977 school budget crisis, a chronology of events--from receipt of the proposed budget to final court approval--is listed. Many parties were involved within the school district and in the community. Frequently, one or more parties blamed other parties for creating the problem. Directors of each of the five service components in Philadelphia's Office of Research and Evaluation prepared statements detailing the impact of budget restrictions, particularly staff layoff, on their respective divisions. The five components are: administrative and survey research, testing, federal evaluation, priority operations, and instructional research and development. Directors reported that the main effects of the budget crisis were low morale, unfulfilled potential, and interruption of program evaluations and report production. Recognizing that the budget crisis is a perennial problem, the Small Project Assessment Service was initiated to provide directors of projects with limited funds and with technical expertise from the Office of Research and Evaluation. While the Service needs some revision, the concept is a good one--especially in financially troubled times. (CP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED167613

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

THE EFFECTS OF BUDGET REDUCTIONS ON PROGRAM EVALUATION IN A LARGE URBAN SCHOOL SYSTEM: PROVIDING SERVICES BEYOND RESOURCES

By

Mark J. Raivetz
Office of Research and Evaluation
The School District of Philadelphia

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mark J. Raivetz

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

Presented as part of a paper presentation on

VARIABLES EFFECTING THE QUALITY OF SCHOOLING

at the Annual Conference of
The American Educational Research Association

Session # 18.24

Toronto, Canada
March 27-31, 1978

Printed in U.S.A.

TM008 426

ERIC

The Effects of Budget Reductions on Program Evaluation in a Large Urban School System: Providing Services Beyond Resources

I. BUDGETS, EVALUATION SERVICES, AND THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA: AN OVERVIEW.

One of the most critical variables affecting the quality of schooling is money: how it is collected, how it is spent, who spends it, and the goods and services it buys. As of July 1, 1977, the School District of Philadelphia was $173 million short of its proposed $684 million budget for the 1977-1978 school year. From March, 1977 (when the Board of Education received the proposed budget) until November, 1977 (when a Common Pleas Court judge granted final approval of a $50 million long-term loan) and beyond, the School District's financial problems were page one news. Quite naturally, the Office of Research and Evaluation was not unaffected by all of this.

This paper will examine the School District's budget crisis from three perspectives. First, the various factors contributing to the problem system wide will be examined, including a chronology of events leading to its resolution (at least for this current year).

Second, the impact of budget problems on the Office of Research and Evaluation in particular will be described. Third, the Small Project Assessment Service, a procedure for the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) to provide program evaluation service beyond its existing personnel resources will be discussed. The degree to which this service is currently utilized, as well as the potential for its future use are included.

II. FINDING THE MONEY TO BALANCE THE BUDGET: THE STORY OF A $173 MILLION DEFICIT.

November 16, 1977. The crisis, at least for the 1977-1978 school year, was finally over. Nearly eight months after the Philadelphia Board of Education received a $684 million proposed budget with a projected deficit of $173 million, a Court of Common Pleas judge granted final approval of a $50 million long term loan. The School District budget was balanced at $635 million; $49 million less than originally proposed.

The series of events which occurred from March through November was involved as any television melodrama, and featured a cast of thousands. Players included the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education, 30,000 employees (10,000 of whom were laid off for the summer; 2,000 permanently), teacher, administrator and maintenence unions, the Pennsylvania State Legislature, the Mayor, City Council, the Philadelphia banking community, 255,000 school children and their parents, the Citizens Committee on Public Education in Philadelphia, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and a Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas judge.

While there was a definite lack of money for the schools throughout the summer of 1977, there were no lack of solutions to resolve the crisis. These solutions, for the most part, involved one or more "players" blaming other "players" for creation of the problem. Each suggested solution for the budget deficit invariably came at the expense of those "players" who were blamed. There was no shortage of finger pointing. Depending on who was pointing, everyone at one time or another was responsible.

The mayor blamed the Citizens Committee on Public Education in Philadelphia (CCPEP) for legal action that questioned loans necessary to balance the budget. CCPEP blamed the Mayor, Board of Education, City Council, unions and the State Legislature for failure to jointly share responsibility for quality education.

Parents blamed the Board of Education for irresponsible spending, especially on union contracts and "frills" (chauffeur driven cars for Board members). The Board of Education blamed pressing demands from unions and increased costs of utilities and supplies. Tax revenues collected by the city for School District use were not keeping pace with the rate of inflation. In spite of a record tax increase the previous year, the schools were not receiving a fair share. For these things, the Board blamed City Council.

City Council blamed the Board for lack of fiscal responsibility. Giving more money to the schools, they said, would cut too deeply into other necessary city services. The Board cited the Educational Home Rule Charter as its defense. The charter provides for a Mayor-appointed School Board prohibited from levying taxes, yet empowered to negotiate contracts with teachers', administrators' and maintenence workers' bargaining units for raises and benefits.

The unions, most notably the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT), blamed the Mayor, City Council, the Board and the State. To account for the majority of the $173 million, nearly 10,000 School District employees were laid off or terminated. PFT leaders refused to give up any previously negotiated contract item, such as increasing class size from 33to35, even if such a move would eventually result in bringing more of its membership back to work. Lay-offs would cost the union thousands of dollars in dues; one percent of each member's salary goes to the union.

Virtually everyone in Philadelphia blamed the State Legislature; a rural/suburban dominated body, split by its own special interest groups yet united in its anti-Philadelphia feeling. The Legislature was unable to settle on a new State budget and unwilling to agree on a subsidy formula to assist in funding any of its 504 School Districts. The Legislature blamed the city government for not doing enough on its own to help the schools. They were anxious for the city to abolish its appointed school board in favor of an elected body which could raise taxes as needed. The Legislature was quick to cite the fact that Philadelphia was the only school district in the state not to have an elected board.

Then, there was Philadelphia's banking community. A consortium of local banks and lending institutions led by one powerful banker regularly lent the School Board money to operate the system. A key element in the budget crisis settlement was a $50 million long-term bank loan. When a Common Pleas Court judge ruled the loan violated a state law (and was upheld by the State Supreme Court) the budget was no longer in balance. Without a balanced budget, the banks refused to provide another type of loan the schools needed -- short-term loans to ease normal cash-flow problems until the system's regular revenues from state and local sources became available.

The law was amended and the $50 million loan approved, but until that was accomplished, the bankers came under heavy criticism for failure to supply the guaranteed short-term loans. The School District missed its payroll by a full week, and parents groups threatened to close accounts in banks refusing to provide the short-term loans.

The special $50 million loan was negotiated on the condition that the school budget could increase no more than 7% per year for the next five years (the term of the loan). The head of the consortium used short-term loans as a lever: no balanced budget, no short-term loans. The School District, in desperate need of the money to save jobs and programs, accepted the conditions. To some, the bankers had finally taken a firm step in the direction of much needed fiscal responsibility for the schools. To others, the bankers had managed to make a healthy eight percent interest ($12.5 million on the $50 million long-term loan) at the expense of School District programs and personnel.

Finally, there were the 255,000 students. While blameless, the budget crisis and its resulting reductions affected them the most.

So much for the cast of players in the School District of Philadelphia's "Budget Crisis" of 1977-1978. Unfortunately, the performance seems set for a long run. The 1978-1979 edition is currently in production.

A chronology of events for 1977-1978 follows:

March 25, 1977 - The Philadelphia Board of Education receives its 1977-1978 proposed budget calling for $684 million. The banking community insists that the budget be balanced prior to its formal adoption, in order for the School District to qualify for short-term bank loans to complete the 1976-1977 school year.

May 31, 1977 - The Board approves a balanced budget. Since the Pennsylvania State Legislature has not agreed on the 1977-1978 State budget, the School District is unable to include any State funds over those received for 1976-1977. As a result, $173 million reductions in personnel and programs are announced. Cuts include all services not mandated by the State. Kindergarten is eliminated; school libraries closed; varsity sports abolished; 32 schools shut; counseling services curtailed. In addition, food services, health services, enrichment programs, art, music, driver education, foreign languages, alternative programs, transportation services, security, building maintenance and operations, business operations, and data processing are all severely cut. In all, close to 10,000 School District employees are slated to be laid off.

June 30, 1977 - As required by union contracts, lay-off letters are distributed to 10,000 workers, including nearly 2,500 teachers, 2,000 custodians, 1,400 noon-time aides, 1,200 cafeteria workers, 800 classroom aides, 700 non-teaching assistants, 400 secretaries, 300 bus drivers, 350 administrators, and 26 staff members of the Office of Research and Evaluation.

July 1, 1977 - There is no State budget. There are no new State monies for the schools. Lay-offs are in effect. Twelve month employees are immediately affected. Ten month employees are ruled eligible to collect unemployment compensation. Newspapers are quick to cite how much money these employees are likely to make over the summer until they are recalled to work; "Lay-off Notices Made School Workers Richer," headlines proclaim.

August 2, 1977 - State Legislators are still trying to agree on a budget that requires no increase in taxes while fully funding all government services and giving additional aid to the public schools. They are not successful. Regardless of how they try, this august body is always $300 million short.

At the School District's personnel office, there is "extreme uncertainty as to what will happen in September." School officials are attempting to assign employees to jobs and buildings. Depending on the Legislature, some may be hired back, some not. How many or which ones are still in question. Teachers who were not laid off, but whose particular programs were cut back or eliminated, are particularly uncertain. An experienced kindergarten teacher, for example, must now be reassigned to another grade. Since the School District has been holding off on reassignments pending action from the Legislature, the teacher is left waiting.

August 20, 1977 - A new State budget is finally adopted. There will be no new taxes. Instead, aid to the state colleges and universities is postponed. Estimated cost for the college aid is figured to be $300 million. Somewhere, there is logic in all of this.

Money from the State to the School District amounts to $50 million. City Council pledges $10 million. The Mayor shifts $14 million in welfare court funds to the schools. The deficit is reduced to $99 million. The Superintendent feels schools may yet open on time.

August 23, 1977 - The leader of the Philadelphia banking consortium and the board meet to discuss terms of a $50 million loan which would reduce the deficit to $49 million, giving the School District a total of $124 million.

The president of Philadelphia Federation of Teachers refuses to waive any portions of its contract in order to save money for the schools.

August 24, 1977 - Banks promise to lend the School District the $50 million. The money does not come without strings. Along with the eight percent interest, the Board is expected to hold the growth of its expenditures to no more than seven percent per pupil annually over the five year term of the loan. The Board's budget has grown between 12 and 18 percent annually since 1967-1968.

The board is split over the loan question. "It's Scarlet O'Hara economics," says one Board member. "We'll worry (about the consequences of the loan) tomorrow." One Board member opposes the loan on the basis of the banks' strict conditions. Another Board member is in favor of operating without the $50 million. "It only digs us deeper into debt...I think we ought to bite the bullet."

Editorials in all three daily papers caution against the loan. CCPEP threatens suit if the loan is accepted.

August 25, 1977	-	The School Board meets to begin deliberations on which jobs, programs and services will be restored.
August 27, 1977	-	The Mayor announces that the city would provide an additional $120 million to the School District. Starting with the 1978-1979 school year, the city would contribute $20 million in both 1978-1979 and 1979-1980, and $40 million in the 1980-1981 and 1981-1982 school years. Critics say that the proposal makes no new money available now, and leaves the next Mayor to pay for the current Mayor's pledges.
August 31, 1977	-	The Board of Education ends the summer-long financial crisis by voting 5-3 to accept the $50 million loan. Notices of recall are mailed to three-fourths of the 10,000 workers who were laid off in June. Restored fully are kindergarten, sports, skills centers, food, health and dental services and enrichment programs. Partially restored are art, music, counseling, transportation, security, driver education, alternative programs, and chauffeurs for Board members and top administrators. Earlier reductions in administration, other educational programs and maintenance workers, are not recinded.
September 9, 1977	-	Schools open for the 1977-1978 academic year.
September 12, 1977		Bus drivers, custodians and maintenance workers for the School District strike in an effort to keep the Board from "stripping" the maintenance union's contract of benefits. The Board seeks a two year contract with no wage increases and refuses to restore any of the 2,373 union members laid off in June as long as there is no contract. As a result, the School District has only 50 bus drivers to operate 262 buses. In spite of no lunch and transportation service, schools remain open. The president of the PFT instructs teachers to report for work as usual, but to do no maintenance tasks. Teachers are directed not to work once building conditions began to deteriorate.

September 15, 1977	-	Although strongly in favor of solidarity, leaders of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) vote to allow the union's 22,000 members to decide at a mass meeting whether to cross picket lines of bus and maintenance workers. Should teachers elect not to cross the lines, the effect on the school system would be crippling.
September 20, 1977	-	Rejecting the recommendation of its leadership the PFT votes overwhelmingly to continue to cross picket lines of striking bus and maintenance workers. Only 200 of the 12,000 union members are in favor of honoring the lines. Maintenance workers crossed teachers' lines, during an 11 week strike in 1972-1973. With its own contract due to expire in September, 1978, the PFT chief negotiator commented that the teachers voted "to go it alone next September."
September 28, 1977	-	Negotiators for the School District and striking maintenance workers and bus drivers reach a tentative agreement.
October 6, 1977	-	By a vote of 1,269 - 1,109 maintenance workers and bus drivers reject the tentative September 28th settlement.
October 13, 1977	-	Steadily mounting heating problems and the absence of striking maintenance workers force the closing of 55 schools.
October 18, 1977	-	Negotiators for the School District and striking maintenance workers and bus drivers reach a second tentative agreement.
October 20, 1977	-	After hearing the latest offer, at a mass meeting, maintenance workers vote by mail to finally end the five week strike. The four year contract calls for no wage increase the first year, increases equal to whatever the teachers get for the second year (a gamble which could see the workers getting nothing the second year also),

and "one-shot" cost of living bonuses for the third and fourth years. In addition, the Board agrees to increase its contribution to the workers health and welfare fund from 60 percent to 100 percent by the fourth year.

October 20, 1977 - A Common Pleas Court judge declares the $50 million loan from the banks to the School District illegal, renewing the financial crisis. The ruling is unexpected by the School District. They immediately appeal to the State Supreme Court.

The ruling forces the Board to re-balance the budget or find $50 million more in revenues. A State law requires school districts to obtain court permission to finance unfunded debt. To do this, the district must prove four things: that the deficit had been incurred legally; that without the loan, serious harm would be done to the city; that it was impossible to increase taxes to eliminate the deficit; and that the deficit had been unforseeable. The judge ruled the deficit was foreseen.

Without the $50 million loan, the budget is no longer balanced, and schools may be closed within two weeks. Without a balanced budget, the bankers may not provide the annual short-term loan to meet payrolls at the end of October.

October 25, 1977 - The Governor advances $20 million in subsidies to the School District to enable the system to remain open beyond Friday, October 28. The city agrees to advance $10 million. The Board votes to delay payment on debts falling due now (including $11 million for the school employees retirement fund) in order to meet the Friday payroll. Union leaders and parents threaten to withdraw funds from any banks refusing to supply the guaranteed short term loans.

October 26, 1977 - By a 4-3 vote, the State Supreme Court upholds the lower court ruling, refusing to allow the $50 million loan. The budget remains unbalanced, and bankers reiterate that they will make no short term loans without a balanced budget.

October 27, 1977 - The Board votes to keep the schools open for at least two more weeks while the State Legislature tries to resolve the system's financial crisis. A bill under consideration would exempt the School District for one year from the law the Common Pleas Court judge ruled it had violated.

Teacher, administrator and maintenance unions agree to continue working without guarantee of receiving their November 11 pay.

November 2, 1977 - The State Legislature gives final approval to legislation that will enable the School District to borrow $50 million, thereby rebalancing the budget and keeping schools open.

November 10, 1977 - The same Court of Common Pleas judge who originally ruled the $50 million loan illegal, "reluctantly" approves the loan following action by the State Legislature. The approval is conditional, pending approval of the final terms of the loan.

November 16, 1977 - With "great trepidation" the Common Pleas Court judge grants final approval of the loan, finally ending the budget crisis for 1977-1978. The loan set for 5 years at 8 percent each year, will actually cost taxpayers $12.5 million in interest.

Short term loans to meet payrolls and bills are immediately negotiated.

November 18, 1977 - School District employees receive checks due them November 11, 1977. The judge warns the school board that the next two years are "frought with economic danger."

ERIC

III. THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION: BUDGET REDUCTIONS STRIKE HOME

A. The Office of Research and Evaluation Described

The Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) of the School District of Philadelphia serves teachers and administrators by providing evaluations of instructional programs, creating innovative measurement instruments, and communicating government-required information.

All functions of the Office of Research and Evaluation are coordinated in the executive director's office. As chief administrator, the executive director is responsible for planning, establishing policy, and monitoring ORE's five service components.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE AND SURVEY RESEARCH SERVICES: develops and supplies required School District data to government agencies, school administrators, and other decision makers. One of its major projects is a computerized directory file of current and historical information about the more than 255,000 Philadelphia public school children. The division conducts follow-up surveys of former School District students and demographic and socio-economic analyses of the present school population, and maintains the Superintendent's Management Information Center, a collection of pertinent information about each school in the system.

2. TESTING SERVICES: plans and administers the citywide standardized testing program. It organizes staff-development sessions and prepares test-administration manuals to inform teachers, counselors, and principals about the examinations. The division

also interprets and distributes test results, school summary profiles, and individual pupil-performance analyses.

3. FEDERAL EVALUATION RESOURCE SERVICES: personnel visit, evaluate and report on Title I and other federally-funded programs for local, state, and national government agencies. Evaluators conduct extensive observations, help develop and implement assessment methods, and write reports which share results and recommendations with administrators. Department personnel also consult with project directors, to aid them in formulating objectives and assessing attainment.

4. PRIORITY OPERATIONS EVALUATION SERVICES: assesses high-priority educational programs at city and district levels. Evaluators look across district and project lines to discover and report successful instructional practices, which might benefit all pupils if more widely adopted. Department personnel evaluate early childhood education, alternative programs, special education, career education, and basic skills projects. Other staff members are assigned to the eight districts to serve the district superintendents.

5. INSTRUCTIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES: assists the other divisions and departments of ORE. It selects and creates instruments for measuring pupil needs and educational progress. Systems for performing statistical analyses, utilizing data files, and scoring and compiling citywide test results are developed

and applied in cooperation with School District data-processing professionals. Staff members also edit and prepare ORE project evaluations and other legally-required documents for publication.

B. The Effects of Budget Reductions on ORE

Teachers and principals were not affected immediately by the budget reductions. Such employees, who normally work the ten month school year, suffered anxiety and uncertainty about the fall, but these employees normally do not work during July and August.

Twelve month employees who were laid off knew the effects of the budget crisis right away. On Thursday, June 30, they came to work. On Friday, July 1, they did not.

When various suggestions were offered as to which programs and services the board could best do without, Research and Evaluation was rarely mentioned. In fact, the head of the Citizens Committee on Public Education in Philadelphia called for an increase in the size of ORE. She cited the need for such service as being especially important in times when cuts had to be made. Who, she asked, could better judge the effectiveness of school district programs than its Office of Research and Evaluation?

In spite of the recognized need for evaluation service, among those not returning to work on July 1 were 26 (of 93) ORE staff members. Budget cuts forced the office to lay-off nearly a quarter of its total professional staff and over one-half of its operating

ERIC

budget personnel. The remaining staff was left to provide service beyond existing resources.

Directors of each of the five service components prepared statements detailing the impact of the budget reductions on their respective divisions if nothing were restored.

Administrative and Survey Research Services (ASRS) reported that it would expect:

1. Elimination of the ten-year enrollment summary report.
2. Delays in the pupil directory (1 month) - major impact.
3. Delays in all survey research (1 month) Short range enrollment projection.
4. Delays in the Superintendent's Management Information Center materials (2 months).
5. Addition by 50% in time of ad hoc service responses to schools.

Division of Testing Services (DOTS) reported that it would expect:

1. Reduction by 2/3 of secretarial/clerical support. (Could continue the testing program, but with timeline extended by several months)
2. 50% reduction in services to schools.

Federal Evaluation Resource Services (FERS) reported that their work could be completed, but with delays. Since this division is federally funded, the budget crisis impacted on it the least.

Priority Operations Evaluation Services (POES) reported that it would expect:

1. A 25% reduction in district field services.

2. Elimination of all Alternative Programs evaluation and checkpoint evaluation.

3. Delays in the Hahnemann Hospital cooperative program.

4. Elimination of the Early Childhood Evaluation Unit and and Early Childhood Pupil Directory File.

5. Sharp curtailment in direct services to schools.

6. Reduction of services to the reading program.

<u>Division of Instructional Research and Development Services (DIRDS)</u> reported that it would expect:

1. Functional Literacy Assessment
   Reading, 12th grade - delayed
   11th grade - severe delays
   Math - postponed one year

2. Increase in response time for analysis requests, in-house scoring services, and other in-house requests which would further delay work to be completed by other ORE divisions.

In a report to the Superintendent and the Board of Education, the Executive Director of ORE examined the division reports to produce a list of products and services which would be either reduced, diminished or eliminated as a result of permanent reductions:

1. Documentation of the impact of the Early Childhood Program.

2. Meeting Federal and State mandates on time

   a. Identify Title I eligible schools

   b. Create lists of Title I eligible pupils

   c. Title I Needs Assessments

   d. ESOL file

   e. Title I Evaluation Summaries

   f. Title I application,

3. Direct services to schools in all research and evaluation and testing areas

4. Feedback to project personnel, staff, and teachers

5. Pupil Directory Information File (PDIF)

   a. PRIP timelines cannot be met

   b. Federal and State reporting requirements - late

   c. Title I eligible schools

   d. Inability to pre-slug will jeopardize ability to score tests in-house

6. PDIF severely limited in direct service to schools

   a. Rollbook leaves

   b. Transportation planning and busing

   c. Ad hoc reports (attendance areas, labels)

7. PDIF cutback would result in interruption in the continuity of other files and would jeopardize data in all files

8. Ability to deal with new Federal reporting system (RMC) - Title I

9. Ability to maintain files and report results for the Functional Literacy Assessment program

10. Ability to provide test results in same year, which means test results cannot be used for organizational purposes

11. Ability to develop proposals to generate additional funds for School District

12. Elimination of all outside cooperative research

13. Use and interpretation of test data in schools

14. Ability to service the following top system priorities:

    Alternative Programs

    Checkpoint Program

    Evaluation of service to Speakers of Other Languages

Kindergarten

Language Skills

Parent Nurseries

Parkway Program

Franklin Learning Center

Pre-school Program - Douglass/Durham

Randolph Skills Center

Reading Program

Swenson Skills Center

Walnut Center

As programs were restored, so too were positions budgeted for evaluation of those programs. By September, most of the ORE professional staff had returned. Of the eight research associates, three research assistants and four research interns who were originally cut, all but one research associate returned to the office. No directors, assistant directors or managers received notice of lay-off.

In spite of the list of products and services which would have been reduced, diminished or eliminated as a result of the reductions, the main effects of the budget crisis on ORE came in the form of low morale, a sense of unfulfilled potential, and a general interruption of service.

1. Low Morale

As in any bureaucracy, the longer one works in the system, the more secure one's position. Such was the case in the School District. Since most advancement generally comes from within, and a teaching certificate is the foundation upon which careers are built, many administrators found themselves back in the classroom (if only for a short time). In terms of morale, this may have been a come down, but it was better than unemployment compensation.

The Office of Research and Evaluation is relatively new in the school district. There had always been a Division of Research, but not until the middle to late 1960's did the office as it is currently structured come to be. ORE staff cameto the office with two different professional orientations: former teachers or administrators with minimum requirements in research or evaluation graduate work, but with years in the system; and university trained specialists with direct related experience in research methodology, test development or evaluation, but with no previous time in the system. The majority of the staff fell into the latter category. Over time, the distinction between these two types of professional staff disappeared. New employees in the office came, for the most part, with the second orientation. As the field of research and evaluation grew nationally, so too did the status of ORE and the professional background of new employees in the office.

Once cuts were announced, however, the only thing that made a difference was permanent time in the system. Many of the "outside the system" staff, while working in ORE since 1968 or 1969, were appointed to their positions through a testing procedure administrated by a previous executive director of the office. These employees were not officially tested through the office of personnel until June of 1973. As far as cuts were concerned, that was the date that counted. Several research associates, through no fault of their own, lost five years seniority. In at least one case, a research assistant who was officially tested through the personnel office, and subsequently

ERIC

appointed a research associate on a provisional basis in 1975, was placed higher on the seniority list than a research associate who had been working provisionally in that capacity since the early 1970's. One's first permanent appointment date served to decide who stayed and who did not. Naturally, those staff members who came to ORE from the classroom were safe. Several had appointment dates in the mid 1950's, when a behavioral objective was nothing more than a gleam in the eyes of Robert Mager. Few gave any thought then then that one day they would work in an office of research and evaluation.

For those who were tested as a group in June, 1973, the examination score was used as final arbiter. A score of 86 on an oral examination kept one employed; a score of 85 led to the unemployment office. This created a severe morale problem.

In the case of the research associates, there were 28 bodies to fill 20 positions. Depending on previous professional experience (a prior school district position) and place on the seniority list, an equitable solution for one associate meant unemployment for another. That it finally came down to a difference of one point on a test was particularly ironic in an office that specializes in test development and statistical analysis, among other things. Is there a standard error of measure on an oral examination?

The morale problem was fueled by several grievances which were initiated over list positions, as well as a suit filed in Federal Court by three female research associates. They claimed racial and sexual discrimination over their scores on the 1973 test which ultimately resulted in their lay-off four years later. The suit forced several research associates, who were not cut to retain legal counsel for their own protection.

Even reinstatement of seven of eight research associates as well as three research assistants and four research interns did not appreciably boost morale in the office. School system morale as a whole was at an all time low. The general attitude was one of "if it happened once, it can happen again." The fact that it came close to happening again only two months later did not ease those feelings to any great degree.

2. Unfulfilled Potential

Very much related to the low morale in the office came a sense of unfulfilled potential. Not only for the ORE staff, but for all School District employees. Traditionally, working for a school system, if not well paying, was secure. Only within the past three to five years has the situation reversed, due to increasing salaries and declining enrollments. Professional men and women who spend thousands of dollars to complete their academic training from their first graduate course through the doctoral dissertation may find themselves at a professional dead end. Regardless of how well they may write, or how much creativity and initiative they may display, there is precious little room for advancement.

There are three main ways to advance to a higher position in ORE (or the school system in general): someone resigns or retires; someone takes another position out of the office or out of the system; or new positions are created.

Within ORE, each manner of advancement is limited. The office is young. No director, assistant director, manager or associate is close to retirement age.

Personnel in supervisory positions (those previously mentioned) are paid quite well. Staff who hold such positions, therefore, are not anxious to take other positions outside the office. Supervisory research and evaluation staff in other cities are generally paid less than their Philadelphia counterparts.

Newly created positions are generally funded categorically. These new positions, however, have served more to keep the office from growing smaller than to provide the means for expansion. As operating budget slots are lost and funding on categorically funded positions runs out, new positions are barely enough to retain the status quo.

Since July 1, 1975, the number of research associate positions has remained stable. One resigned, one left to take another position within the system, one was hired from outside the system (and terminated June 30, 1977), and two research assistants have been promoted to associate. A net change of no new associates; promotion from within of two research assistants.

This lack of movement, coupled with the devastating morale problem caused by the cuts, created a sense of unfulfilled potential in many of the staff. This feeling (while hardly ORE specific) is less than comforting. Too many assistant professors of education waiting for tenure, too many college graduates looking for teaching positions, and too many teachers holding un-used principal certificates only share the feeling. It is something that those of us who chose education as a career have to live with just now.

3. Interruption of Service

The third main effect of the budget reductions on ORE came in the form of interrupted service. There was a great loss of time. Summer is report writing season. The past year's reports and program evaluations are completed while objectives for the coming year's programs are discussed and formulated with project personnel.

Report production was interrupted for five main reasons: first, a lack of typing service due to vacations and the lay-off of one-third of the secretarial staff; second, the lay-off of staff members responsible for writing reports; third, the necessity for staff members not familiar with projects to complete reports started by laid off staff members (these being over and above their own work load); fourth, the delay in analysis of data due to cuts in the Division of Data Processing; fifth, lay-off, reorganization and reassignment of project personnel which delayed formulation of 1977-1978 program objectives.

Evaluations of the district reading programs serve as an example of interrupted report production. Each of the five main reasons can be cited to explain how the final evaluation reports for the 1976-1977 school year were not published and released until March of 1978.

Each of the school system's eight administrative districts annually submits a comprehensive reading plan to central administration. Four research associates were responsible for evaluating the plans (each servicing two districts). Research assistants were assigned to the five districts with the largest Title I populations to assist in the evaluation effort. How these reports, normally published by September, were delayed until March follows. Each main reason is detailed.

1. Lack of typing service: Secretaries who normally would be typing final reports for other projects were laid off. Remaining secretarial staff (one secretary) was left to complete reports from Alternative Programs, Career Education, Special Education as well as the district reading reports.
2. Lay-off of staff members responsible for writing reports: Cuts reduced four associates and five assistants, who normally are responsible for writing the reports, to two associates and four assistants.
3. Necessity for staff members not familiar with projects to complete reports started by laid-off staff members: ORE staff with enough seniority to escape lay-offs, but whose programs were eliminated, were reassigned to positions in funded programs left open by ORE staff who were cut. The fact that a program was cut did not mean, however, that no final report on the program was necessary. This left double work for several ORE staff members.
4. Delay in analysis of data due to cuts in the Division of Data Processing: This delay only compounded the situation, especially when a staff member had to take over a report from one of those staff who was cut.
5. Lay-off, reorganization and reassignment of project

personnel: As a result of the budget reductions, administration of the reading project was reorganized. Reading Managers, who were responsible for project administration in each district, were terminated. So too, were all but eight reading supervisors (one for each district) and all reading consulting and collaborating teachers on district budgets. Reading supervisors were retained on seniority. In two cases, managers "bumped back" to supervisors in their districts. In two other instances, supervisors remained in their districts when the managers were cut. Because operating budget funds were most affected by budget reductions, the seven districts with Title I eligible schools were assigned additional reading help in the form of Title I reading coordinators. These positions were filled by six former supervisors and one former manager. There were no lack of problems in implementing this new organization. Mostly, they involved personnel. Coordinators reported to supervisors, but since most of the money coming into the districts was Title I, some coordinators looked upon themselves as being independent. The fact that supervisors-turned-coordinators took a pay cut, while reporting to their former equals who remained as supervisors only served to complicate the situation. In one case, a former manager-turned-coordinator was assigned to work in the same district with a former manager-turned-supervisor.

All of this impacted on ORE in a curious fashion. While research associates were unaffected, four research assistants were each assigned to two districts to provide evaluation service. Since they were paid by Title I funds, Title I coordinators viewed them as an addition to their staffs (thereby increasing their power). This was clearly not the case, since the assistants were employees of ORE regardless of the funding source. These problems were eventually worked out, but until things were finally set, objectives for the 1977-1978 year were late in coming.

IV. PROVIDING SERVICE BEYOND RESOURCES: THE SMALL PROJECT ASSESSMENT SERVICE

There are two clear yet, unfortunately, conflicting trends. First, the need for evaluation service of educational programs continues to grow. Second, there is less and less money available for the personnel resources necessary to conduct program evaluations in public schools. The School District of Philadelphia and its Office of Research and Evaluation are not at all unique.

Problems discussed in this paper are shared nationwide. The extent to which an office of research and evaluation can provide service to clients beyond existing personnel resources is worth exploring.

The Small Project Assessment Service (SPAS), initially developed by Irvin J. Farber, director of the Priority Operations Evaluation Services division of ORE, is an attempt at one such exploration.

As a service unit, ORE receives many requests for research and evaluation assistance. Since the majority of the resources in the office are committed to legally required evaluations, it is impossible to respond to all such requests.

It was in an attempt to deal with this problem that the Small Project Assessment Service was initiated. This service was designed to assist directors of small projects (which do not have sufficient funding to provide evaluation resources) to assess their own projects so that they could get some sense of degree of movement toward their objectives. This service made available to project directors the technical expertise of ORE personnel to help them in their assessment efforts and provide an end-of-year ORE program review for the purpose of certifying what occurred.

Basically, the Small Project Assessment Service is a four step process:

<u>Step 1</u> - involves completion of the Project Outline Form by the project director (coordinator). Once this is forwarded to ORE, it is reviewed and assigned to a staff member who studies the project description and arranges a meeting with the project director or his designee.

<u>Step 2</u> - involves a meeting at which the "Project Assessment Plan" is completed. At this meeting, a precise plan of action is outlined. The ORE staff member assigned to the project handles any necessary consultations with other ORE personnel (usually members of the Division of Instructional Research and Development).

Step 3 - The project director or his designee conducts the project assessment as outlined in the Project Assessment Plan. Results of this assessment are forwarded to the ORE auditor in such form and at such time as previously agreed.

Step 4 - is a review of the completed assessment effort by the ORE staff member assigned to the project. If the assessment has been done properly and as planned, the accuracy of the assessment is then certified by ORE.

SPAS was introduced to school district administrative personnel in May, 1975. In the nearly three years since its introduction, it has, quite frankly, been under utilized. Only two projects have taken advantage of Small Project Assessment. Both involve large numbers of students in over two dozen junior high schools. Neither of the projects have followed the complete four-step process.

While the potential is there, SPAS has not been an overwhelming success for two main reasons. First, project personnel do not take the initiative. They expect the ORE staff member (who is doing this over and above regular work assignments) to do the entire assessment alone. Second, SPAS data processing requests receive the lowest priority from the Division of Instructional Research and Development Services. SPAS is free, and while ORE's intentions have been honorable, projects still "get what they pay for." A small project cannot be given the same priority for scoring services as the funded evaluations which pay ORE salaries.

ERIC

The Small Project Assessment Service was not introduced here simply to show its lack of success. Certainly this paper would be long enough without any mention of it at all. While it needs some revision in its present form the concept is a good one, especially in financially troubled times.

An office of research and evaluation could make an investment in itself by assigning one staff member to SPAS full time, or by saving some portion of its data analysis staff time for SPAS jobs.

In times of financial crisis, an office of research and evaluation is likely to find itself shrinking in size from budget to budget. Such an office must cultivate, educate and serve its clients. Small Project Assessment may be a way to do all three.

7. FINAL THOUGHTS

The School District of Philadelphia's budget problems are not unique among large urban school systems. How its Office of Research and Evaluation managed to provide service with decreased personnel could set examples for other research and evaluation units to follow. The degree to which the Small Project Assessment Service is utilized is important to document. Ways to raise school districts' collective consciences about the importance of strong research and evaluation offices must be explored.